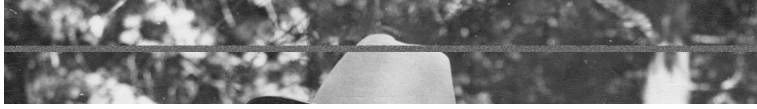


1905

Robert Haley Asher



Robert Haley Asher, September 9, 1945

Robert Haley Asher was born 28 March 1868, to Josephus Marion Asher, who was the first commercial nurseryman in the San Diego area, providing buyers with fruit trees, shrubs, & vines from his Fruit Vale ranch in Paradise Valley, National City. Robert Asher settled on Palomar Mountain in 1903, and ultimately had 160 acres, living in the Pauma Creek / State Park area. Robert Asher also lived off Palomar Mountain part of the year working as a nurseryman among other things. On Palomar, Asher photographed summer campers, then developed and sold them photos; he also sold postcards off his photos, trapped animals for pelts, collected and sold wild plants, picked apples, and worked odd jobs. Asher moved off Palomar Mountain in 1946 to his sister Mrs. Josephine A. Vacher's place on Fuerte Drive in El Cajon and continued to visit Palomar Mountain until 1951. Asher passed away on 25 April 1953.

These digitized pages are from the Robert Haley Asher papers (held by Peter Brueggeman). When Josephine Vacher's son vacated the family house in El Cajon, the family gave Robert Asher materials at that location to Peter, due to his Palomar Mountain history interests. Digitization of these materials and posting them to the Internet Archive is intended to enhance and preserve access to these materials.

Missing some pages. The final page dates Asher's writing to November 30, 1946.

⑧

"U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, Bureau of Forestry,
Pasadena Cal. Feb. 28, 1905. Mr. Robert H.
Asher, El Cajon Cal. Dear Sir: I will take
the Torrey seed at 75¢ per pound delivered
here, and I will remit on receipt. Yours
truly, (Signed) T. R. Lukens."

"San Francisco, Feb. 28, 1905. Mr. R. H. Asher, Dear
Sir: your request of Jan. 30th was presented by your
bro. about 10 days ago. I was out at the time and
have not seen him since, so I concluded to send
you a check for 25.00 Cal due you. Can you
collect for me 25 to 30 lb. *Pinus Coulteri* for which
I pay usually 1.00 per lb. And is there a chance
of collecting a lot of Monterey Cypress seed. I could
use 100 lb or more. One sack of cones gives about
8 lb of seed and the present wholesale market
price is 40 to 45 ct per lb. I thought perhaps
the Monterey Cypress grows plenty full about
your country, that is, cultivated trees of course.
Both of these seeds could be collected now or
almost at any time. I am willing to pay cash
for them. Yours truly (Signed) F. A. Miller."

"San Diego Cal. Mar. 4, 1905. Mr Robt. Asher, Dear
Friend: I will go up on Palomar middle of
Mar. or 1st of Apr. Would like to take you

⑨ A.R.F.

"along to help me build the cabin. If I
can arrange for you to go too will do so.
Write me or when in San Diego call.
Yours Resp. (Signed) A.R. Ferguson."

"Nellie, Calif. Mar. 14 th 1905. Dear May: I have
not heard from home since I left. I cut my
letters short on Saturday and didn't wait for the
mail as it looked so much like rain. But the
rain caught me half way. When I got to the
cabin I made up a fire and changed my clothes
and didn't catch cold - even if the rain did
catch me. It is foggy just now at the Post
Office - and it may rain again. We had 3.36
inches for the storm - and have had nearly
40 inches for the season so far. Well, so
long. With love to all. Your brother (Signed) Robert"

Mothers will be mothers! I had been getting tree seed for
Mr. Miller
"El Cajon, April 20, 1905. My Dear Robert: Are you
still climbing trees? - if so I wish you would
hurry up and get through, for I am uneasy all
the time for fear you may fall - I hate to have
you so much alone - if you should get sick or
any other evil such as wild beasts should
trouble you. Let me know as often as you can a-
bout yourself. Our vineyard is recovering some-
what. There may be a small crop - but I don't

(10) (5th)

Know about that even. Allen's vineyard is worse if anything than ours. Oh well, nothing seems so bad but what it might be worse. Though Papa doesn't talk that way his melon patch survived wonderfully. I really think if worms will let them alone that he will make some money. Now I think this brings me up to date. Your report now. Afft. (Signed) Mother.

That was something new to me - the "wild beasts" of Palomar as a menace to any mother's son - I would say that it would be rather the other way around - man a menace to the "wild" beasts - coyotes, foxes, skunks, racoons, civit cats, lynx cats etc etc.

"San Francisco. April 24th 1905. Mr. R.H. Asher. Dear Sir; I received your postal of April 17th. The bag of seeds came to hand, but the seed weighed only 27 lb net. Of course you understand that freshly gathered seeds often lose considerable in weight in the course of 8 or 10 days. It may not be quite as much lose quite as much in a few days, but scales vary quite often. I see you head your letter as "Nellie". Your address in my books is El Cajon, San Diego Co. Which is

(11) (F.A.M.)

Correct. El Cajon or Nellis? Yours
truly. (Signed) F.A. Miller."

"Moosa, Calif. April 29. My Dear Robert, Your
good letter at hand several days ago. Always
glad to hear from you We have three
boarders now which keeps us quite busy.
Elizabeth and I hope to see the beauties of
Chimpa Rosa Park this summer - at least
that is our plan now to try to get up for
two days in early July. I trust you are well
and prospering and will get down to see us
often - always glad to have you. Remember us
to all the folks. Your friend. (Signed) Pakoosa Rex.
(Isaac Frazer)

(12)

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"Mesa Grande, California, May 20th 1905. The
Misses Rosalia Nejo and Frances Lachappa. Dear
Friends. This will introduce Mr Asher of El
Cajon, a friend of mine, and any courtesy you
can show him or information you can give, will
be greatly appreciated by me. If your school
is in session, will you kindly allow him to
take a group photograph of the pupils and
teacher so that I can see what the school
is like and send copies to the friends and work-
ers who are sending financial aid to keep
the good work up. Very sincerely yours (Signed)
Edw. H. Davis."

"El Cajon, May 29, '05. My Dear Robert: Just think —
I was sitting in the dining room just after
lunch Friday resting when the door opened
and in walked Alf and Jay — only the evening
before I received a letter from him (Jay) written in
Sacramento. He came directly to S. Diego not

(13)

(304a)

stopping in S. Francisco - by train - and
won't Dorcas be surprised to see him here?
She and Eva (Jeffrey) will be here to-morrow
on the Santa Rosa. When shall you be
home? What are you doing where you are?
By the way Mr. Salmon asked Papa where
you were. Papa told him Nellie - he took the
address. Perhaps you have heard from him.
I expect after the people get home to be rather
busy for awhile - but shall always find
time to answer all letters from you. Write
soon. Affly (Signed) Mother."

(June '05) "Campo, Calif. Mr R. H. Asher; Dear Sir:-
Sorry to return the money, but I do not know
of any one, who would be willing to gather
the seeds, besides as I said in my last letter
that we are going off on a vacation the
1st of July. Respectfully yours (Signed) Rosalea Nejo."

"El Cajon June 29 '05. Dear Robert; The inclosed
clippings may be of interest to you. There is no special
news. Eva seems to be enjoying herself very much.
She is a very pleasant visitor Affly. (Signed) Mother."

From San Diego paper of June 27, 1905.

"Railroad to be Built to Pala. Project for Development
of Electric Power on San Luis Rey River -- Will develop
Lithia Mines." From paper of June 28, 1905

(14) From newspaper 1905

"Millionaires Are Behind the Scheme, Options Secured on thousands of acres in San Luis Rey Valley - Big Appropriation of Water."

Ed Fletcher had obtained a 60-day option on the Agua Tibia Ranch, consisting of 1,206 acres, for \$5000, of which \$2500 was to be paid at the time of transfer, and the remainder in four years. The option was given by L. J. Utt and Sarah M. Utt. The water rights to go with the land.

^{June 27.}
"County Clerk F. A. Salmon and Ed Fletcher have been, during the past few years, quietly securing options on land along the San Luis Rey River, following down the river from Pala towards Oceanside. It is stated that the same men, behind whom Los Angeles interests, have also secured an option until September upon land in the Doane Valley upon Palomar mountain as the site for a reservoir. Paloma Creek, a fine water source runs through the valley and down the mountain. With a storage reservoir in the valley it is said to be the plan to utilize the fall for the development of electric power. The recent visit here of President Crane of the Lithia and Chemical company, which controls the output of the Pala mine, is surmised to have considerable to do with the present moves being made, as Mr Crane is reputed to have looked favorably upon the project."

From The San Diego Union. July 2, 1905.

"Huntington Interested In The Pala Railroad Electric Road Magnate Came As Far As Oceanside Yesterday And Is Making Investigations Today - Coming Here Tomorrow."

"The plan which Mr. Salmons has outlined, and partly worked out, is comprehensive, and will take more than one day to examine, so that Mr. Huntington will probably return to Oceanside not before tomorrow, and will then come on to San Diego if the unauthorized rumor of his intentions is to be believed. . . . For the power plant there have been a number of filings on the water of the San Luis Rey River; and an option has been secured on a reservoir site in Doane Valley, from which there is a big drop to the level of the Pauma Ranch, where the water would be used for irrigation. This drop of water would result in the development of immense power for the use of the electric line."

I'll admit that the S. D. Union articles made me feel very uneasy as to the safety of my rights to the creek water - how could a little chap like me hope to win out in a fight with a multimillionaire like Henry E. Huntington? The idea was absurd - but?

"Which, Calif. July 14th, '05. Friend Asher, I am glad

(16) (C.P.)
"to hear that you are still alive and kicking. I am well, happy, and exceedingly busy and now well located in my mountain home eight miles from Uiah and 1600 feet higher than that place. Practically all of my cultures are doing well. Pavi is the only lily that is not easy. I am having some plots do so well this and last year that I begin to feel that I am on the road to success with that also. I am doing well with Tulips, Hyacinths, and Daffodils. I believe that I will demonstrate the possibility of thoroughly successful growth of all of them. Collect the *Lilium Bloomerianum* as late as you can and send on any number up to 1000. I already have *Bloomeria Clevelandii* and 24,000 c. *Albus*. How about tree seeds? Yours truly, (Signed) C. P. Purdy."

How is that for a change from the depths of the Dead Sea to the heights of Mount Everest? Could it be that the development of the new place had kept Friend ~~brother~~ Purdy broke for the previous few "hard-luck" months? Anyhow, Purdy, himself, was at last well and happy.

To come back to H. E. Huntington. I became uneasy and uneasy until at last I broke loose and wrote a letter to H. E. himself. This about July 20th and sent it off by registered mail! By same I sent another letter to J. W. Wilcutt in San Francisco. Mr. Wilcutt was an old friend of father's and Secretary of the Southern Pacific Railroad Co.

(17)

My wheel turned over over and rolled

El Cajon, Calif. July 26, 1905 - Dear Rob: - How are you and the world agreeing? When will we see you again? Mother and Cousin went in to San Diego yesterday. Josephine is conducting this house. Ben ran away and broke the carriage. He was tied in the barn - we were eating supper - we heard a carriage but thought it was just someone driving in - bye and bye we went to see - Ben had run the carriage into the barbed wire fence. There it was with the shafts resting on the first wire from the ground. The second was broken - one wheel broken - the others twisted out of shape. The iron cross piece under the body of the buggy broken, and the harness too - Ben had charged down toward Mac Donald's, but changed his mind and came back to Hawley's corner - where he easily let Alf catch him. He had only a scratch about six inches long on the back of his left back foot. We will ride in the old wagon now. --- yesterday and the day before we shipped a hundred watermelons. It is cloudy today, it wasn't yesterday. Lovingly (signed) Dorcas.

New York, July 27, 1905: Robert H. Asher, Esq.
Nellie, Cal. - Dear Sir: Yours of 19th, relative to

(18)

(H E H)

certain water properties in California, has reached me in New York & in reply I have only to say that I am not interested in the land you claim to hold. Yours truly,
(Signed) H. E. Huntington.

"Southern Pacific Railroad Company, No 431 California Street, San Francisco Cal., July 28, 1905. Registered, Mr. Robert H. Asher, Nellie, San Diego Co., Cal. My Dear Mr. Asher: - Your letter of the 19th inst. enclosing one addressed to Mr. H. E. Huntington, reached here during the absence of both myself and son from the city, so there has been a little delay in getting Mr. Huntington's letter on the way, but I have today sent it by registered mail, as requested, he having started for New York some ten days or two weeks ago. I feel as you do, that if this a matter that Mr. Huntington is interested in, he will have you fairly treated in it, though it may be that he will have nothing to do with the details - simply saying to the contractors, if you can furnish me so and so, I will give you so much for it, or on the other hand, the contractors may have a proposition to make to Mr. Huntington. However, I trust that you will not suffer from any encroachments from any one and shall be glad to hear of your success in the matter with whoever

19

J. L. W.

you may have to deal with, enclosing herewith
copy of my letter to Mr. Huntington and with
kind regards to all the family; I remain, yours
very truly, (Signed) J. L. Wilcutt.

San Francisco, July 28, 1905. Mr. H. E. Huntington.
23 Broad St., New York, N.Y. My Dear Mr. Huntington:
The inclosed letter I find in an inclosure addressed
to me upon my return to the city after a few days
absence, with an explanatory note that my being an
old friend of the family of the writer and knowing of
my former relations with you, he had, in his
anxiety to have you receive the letter, sent it to
me that it might be properly mailed to reach you.
Mr. Asher writes me that while he has no positive
knowledge that you have any connection with the
project referred to, that your name has been con-
stantly associated with it and he feels that if you
are to be interested in it that he will be fairly
treated in the recognition of his rights if he can get
the matter properly before you. I would add that
the family went to San Diego several years ago, so the
young men have been raised in that vicinity and are
all well and favorably known and I have no doubt the
writer of the letter can produce endorsers for any statement
he may make to you. His father was Tax Collector there
for several years and later Public Administrator
and has lived in El Cajon Valley and San Diego since

20

(J.L.W.)

the early seventies I think. Following Mr. Asher's request to have this letter registered, and appreciating any attention that it may receive from you, I remain, yours very truly, (Signed) (J.L. Willcutt)"

"El Cajon, Aug. 8 '05. You poor dear Boy! Those horrid wasps! I hope you were not badly stung — write soon, so I may know. Dorcas letter from you was welcome, as we were beginning to look for news from you. — Speaking of water — Maria Hall came out on the train with me Monday — in talking over things she mentioned "on dit" that Escondido was to have water from Smith's Mountain — some company was to supply it. Has that anything to do with your water claim? Now for news! ^{Today} Alf begins work for Folsom Bros. at Pacific Beach and best news of all — Papa approved!!! so Alf has gone away happy — there is nothing this time of the year on his own place. — I forgot to tell you — Alf will be over at the Beach in charge of the grounds around the Hotel and just now will help in the fitting up & preparation of the Hotel for "The Grand Opening" Aug. 15. It is a fine First Class Hotel. Eva and Dorcas have great

(21) (SAA)

times but the loss of the buggy is hard. The wagon and Old Ben combined all too much for the girls — to harness and unharness are hard too. We miss our boys sure. Well dear — shall we see you at the Wedding? Write soon & Tell us how you are — frequently — and what you are doing — Lovingly (Signed) Mother.

"Pacific Beach, Aug 9, 1905. Dear Brother Bob: — You will see by my address I am now living at Pacific Beach. I have a job with the Tolsonis. — I have finished my 2nd days work today. I think I shall like it here. How are you getting along. Are you holding your water rights all right. They are grading streets fixing up the hotel and doing things up fine. Well with lots of love I remain your Loving Brother. (Signed) A. R. Asher."

"El Cajon, Calif. Aug. 14. 1905. Dear Rob: Did the yellow jackets eat you all up? Alf is gone — He is working at Pacific Beach for sixty dollars a month at first. Allen Hawley was over looking at Pacific Beach last week — I don't know whether or not he will buy. Eva expects to stay here until after Jay and

Dorcas

and Mabel are married — some time next month — Art Hall and Kent Hawley left for Berkeley last Saturday. Mrs Lee gave a farewell party for them Thursday night. We had a sandy time. Lovingly.
(Signed) Dorcas "

" Ukiah, Calif. Aug 17th '05. Mr. R. H. Asher.
Dear Sir: — Your letter at hand. I want the lilies ripe, and Oct. 1st. here will do me. . . . I hope that you will do well with the water you have. I have a very large fine lot of Burbank seedling lilies. As yet the pale has been light but they are beginning to move this year and will I think be a good thing in time. It takes monumental patience to win out in this business. We are very comfortable in our home in the high mountains and I have no desire to go back to town. We make more and live for less so that the balance is on the right side. With kind regards. Yours truly (Signed) Carl Purdy "

" Folsom Bros. Company, San Diego, Cal. August 21st, '05. Dear Robt. Mother has just sent me yours of recent date and I see by it you have written. Where your letter is I don't know. You may be sure I don't go back on you so easily. You certainly have a swell proposition up there and I hope you will stay right by it thro

(23) (A. Magr)

thick and thin. Be sure your claim is right, I was told this very morning you had your fortune made if you hung right on and held Salmon at all at bay for a short time. I am glad you have written direct to H. E. H. He seems to be on the square. Don't worry about coming down here for the wedding or about any present. Stay right where you are and win out, ---- your loving brother (Signed) Jay

"El Cajon, Aug 28, 1905. My Dear Robert, You are plucky, persistent and patient - three qualities that ought to bring you out ahead. You have a good thing and you ought not to mind "bluffs". It is hard to be so much alone but with the object in view you can endure it. We have good reports around Josie, Alf + Jay. ---- With Dearest Love. (Signed) Mother"

From the beginning I regarded my Palomar Mountain venture as "home". I was really and truly at home there inasmuch as I myself was concerned - and I looked forward to the time when others - not necessarily of my own family - would be at home in the canyon, too. To me, it was the center of the world. All my plans were centered there. As for bluffs - perhaps some folks thought Bob Asher was bluffing too - but I wasn't bluffing - I the home-place I had been looking for - and ~~that~~ ^{it was}

(24)

had not the slightest desire or intention of
selling out - and getting out - not until
sickness, or old age, made a move imperative -
and with appreciative people coming in after me to
enjoy the things I ^{had} enjoyed dreaming over and
trying to do.

"San Diego, Cal. Sept 1st 1905, Dear Robert. Your
letter rec'd a day or two ago. I am glad you are
well. I haven't been at all well the last few
days. I spoke to Dodson - A. E. & he said
you were all solid up there. --- I hardly
think I would trust --- from our ex-
perience with him. He was treated square
and has no reason to kick. His brother
tried to get a position with our Co. a week
or so ago but was turned down flat, in
haste. (Signed) Jay."

"El Cajon, Cal. Sept. 8/05, R. A. Asher. Nellie Cal. My Dear
Son: After some delay have got Miller's address &
will ship the cypress seed as directed this after-
noon. 2 1/2 lbs net for you & 3 1/2 lbs net for Al-
phedus. The weight is by my scales. Have written
to A.R.A. & will write to Miller as requested. ... Figs &
Salmons & Fletcher are trying to force you. Wish I
had money to help you fight them. Hoping this will
find you well & cheerful & hoping to hear from you
I am, Your Father (Signed) J. M. Asher."

(26)

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Per (signature)

"San Diego, Cal. Sept. 15th, '05. Dear Robert - Ed.
Fletcher took me up to his private office today
to give me some very fine pointers free of
charge. It would take too long to tell you all
he said about you and your claims - however
he said you would be making the mistake of
your life if you held out for too high a price
for your water interest. He says he is not
personally interested in the power proposition -
but that he of course knows who is - and
that if you don't sell out your water at a
reasonable figure no less than four big
people will start in to do you up. He says
Salmons has the only reservoir site up there
and that they can drive you out if it comes to
a showdown. They don't want the land you
hold at all - and Fletcher says if you hold
it you will get a small fortune for it later
on. He says your land claim is as good as gold -

(27) J. M. A. Jr.

but that you sell the water right of way
when "the proper parties make you an offer"
A. E. Dodson - who at once I went over to see -
says the same thing. Pay no attention to
the numerous fakes up there. Anything from
\$8000 - or \$10000 up should satisfy you
for the water as you can keep the land which
will be worth much pretty soon. . . . Be wise -
but not too wise. With love (Signed) Jay."

Where Brother Jay got that "Anything from \$8000.
or \$10000 up" beats me. Maybe it was a Fletcher
suggestion (meaning just nothing) so far as I could
judge the game was to get me out for just that -
nothing.

"Escondido Res. Dist. Sept 18th. Mr Robert Asher,
Dear Sir; I started for your section on a
camping trip a few days ago but owing
to stage schedule came over here instead -
but will probably start horseback over to
your place on Wed or Thurs. of this week to
look over your property as doubtless your
brother has advised you I would do in near
future. Wishing you the best of success I am very
sincerely. (Signed) W. A. Folsom."

(31)

Valley
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From S. L. Tribune Sept 28, 1905.

It is learned that nearly all of the purchasable property east of Oceanside and to Warner's Ranch, and also to that portion of the country known as Smith's or Palomar mountain has been purchased by north-
ern interests. Those who are in a position to know are confident that the property has been purchased by the Huntington interests of Los Angeles. A portion of the property has been purchased by Frank Salmon and Ed Fletcher, but they are believed to be acting in the interests of Huntington. --- Among the large pieces of property sold are the following:

Simon Goldbaum Ranch, 530 acres, \$34,450. Herbert Branch Ranch, 880 acres, \$26,400. Pauma Ranch, 13,000 acres, about \$85,000. George Doane Ranch, 640 acres, about \$24,000. Booker Ranch, 480 acres, about \$3,500. Clark Ranch, 80 acres, about \$2,000. Crookshank Ranch, 80 acres, about \$2,000. Penny Ranch, 160 acres, about \$4,000.

--- The Doane Ranch comprises a portion of what is known as Palomar Mountain and also all of Doane Valley. Through this valley runs the Pauma creek and it is said to be the intention of the new owners to construct a dam at the mouth of the valley which will give a reservoir about three miles long and one and a half

(32) S.D. Tril.

"miles wide. This reservoir will be used partly as a portion of the power system which, it is said, will be installed and also as a sportsmen's resort. The lake will be stocked with fish of various kinds, and a large hotel erected near by. This hotel will be thoroughly modern in every respect and will have accommodations for about 300 guests. . . . The only property of any importance which it is said the investors could not secure is the Mandenhall property near Palomar. This property is a portion of the Mandenhall estate."

Asher's property was not "secured" - but of course Asher's was not of any importance!

From S.D. Tribune, Sept 29, 1905

"Los Angeles Interested. The news of the big deals being made in the country east of Oceanside is causing a great deal of interest in Los Angeles. This morning's Los Angeles Examiner says: 'W. S. Kerchoff admitted yesterday that he is a member of the syndicate which has made purchases of land. As he is closely affiliated with H. E. Huntington, his statements are taken as confirmation that a large project is on foot in the section referred to.'"

"New York, Aug. 28, 1905. Robert H. Asher Esq. Nellie. Cal. Dear Sir: I have rec'd through Mr. J. L. Wilcutt your letter of July 27th ult. I find that I answered on the 27th ult. a duplicate letter from you. I am inclined to think that this water property you refer to is one in which I have an interest in conjunction with other parties and so I have sent your letter to Mr. W. S. Kerchoff of Los Angeles. Yours truly. (Signed) H. E. Huntington."

(33)

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"Pacific Light & Power Company. Los Angeles. Cal. Nov. 24, 1905
Mr. Robert H. Asher, Nellie California. Dear Sir: - your
favor of October 9th, addressed to Mr Huntington,
has just been received by me, and contents noted.
Some time when you are in Los Angeles, I should be
glad to see you regarding this matter. I note what you

(34) WSK

"you say in regard to your expectations of profit,
which seem to be entirely separate from your
claim on the water. I should be glad to take
the matter up with you at any time you are in Los
Angeles. Yours very truly. (Signed) Wm S. Kerchoff."

(Postman

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I have
This con
mission
lands we
Chas. E."

"Valley Co
to get up
at home
and get
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"Los Angeles Cal. Nov. 11, 1905. Mr. Robert H. Asher, Nellie.
California. Dear Sir: - In answer to your favor of
November 9th, would say, that I have nothing to sug-
gest in the water matter. Yours very truly. (Signed)
Wm S. Kerchoff."

With this last entry we seem to have come to an end of this particular part of our story. I had endeavored to make it plain that I wanted to be left alone to do as I pleased with the land and water of my canyon — and — the Huntington interests evidently had decided to leave me alone — for we had no further correspondence in the matter.

Some folks have wondered out loud as to who put Bob Asher into the canyon in the first place — and who has been ~~paying~~ ^{putting} up for his expenses ever since. The foregoing items from my correspondence of those first years should answer both questions most conclusively. It was Robert H. Asher's scheme — and Asher financed it from his rather scanty earnings.

Vacher Ranch.
El Cajon Calif.
Nov 30, 1946

Robert H. Asher.

